
Creating A New Wardrobe On A Budget

Transition is expensive. In my wardrobe consultations with a new TG woman, we establish how to begin buying on a basic backbone while incorporating the concept of "Capsule Dressing".

For example, buying one high quality skirt suit in a solid color and wearing the skirt several times per week. Pair them with less expensive blouses, sweaters or quality cotton T-shirts, from a discount store. Your next good purchase will be a classic dress that could be dressed up with pearls, or down with your classic pump. A black cocktail dress is another basic that you can wear for different occasions, from a dressy dinner to a formal play or opera. Go for a fitted classic line, simple but sophisticated. By using Capsule Dressing, and building your wardrobe on a basic style and color backbone, you will begin to see your wardrobe build and improve. Here are more tips for creating your wardrobe on a budget, emphasis being kept on classic pieces, not fad.

What shoes are best for the TG woman for business?

I suggest an open toe and heel pump in a low heel. A sling back is ideal for the wider foot. A pair of good quality boots for winter and rainy days. Scandals and tennis shoes for summer and Friday casual. Always be sure your shoes are darker than your purse, or outfit. Remember, it is best to keep your heel under 3 inches for business attire. Be sure your pump matches your bag as closely as possible. If you wear a belt, try to match it to your shoe. TG women generally need to wear a woman's WIDE or an open toe in a medium and Nordstrom's and PayLess Shoes carry size 10 and over and have several styles in WIDE.

Avoid wearing rhinestones, pearls, black hosiery, or any shiny fabric during the day.

Keep your look casual- sophisticated, and add femininity with colorful scarf's, blouses, classic jewelry, and feminine accessories. Don't be afraid to add accessories, they can be a girl's best friend. Try fun things; a wool pull over cap or beret for those rainy mornings, or add a matching cashmere scarf and gloves. Straw hat and bag for summer, or pretty clips for your hair. Look in magazines and at other women to get ideas, experiment with how comfortable you are with adding in accessories and changing your look. Also, experiment with different hairstyles, perhaps wearing a French Twist or perhaps pinning a flower behind your ear for evening, gives you another look.

Should you buy expensive hosiery?

I have not found much difference between the two. Stock up on several pairs and always watch for a sale. Often a store such as Mervyn's will have a sale advertised so go early as the best colors fly out of the store; as women purchase 5-10 pairs at sales. Also, stores such as K-Mart and Walgreens have some great pantyhose, so don't feel you have to pay more. Look for the tall sizes in hosiery as they generally fit the TG woman's frame better. Wear a hosiery color that is as close to your natural skin tone as possible. Always wear darker hose after October and

wear lighter hose (scandal foot toe) starting around Easter. Sheer hose run very easily, so I recommend you select hosiery that has some spandex; generally these hose are called mild to medium support. Total support (opaque) hose are ideal for the CD that doesn't always have the opportunity to shave her legs.

Also, purchase a lingerie bag for your washing machine that zips up. (Available at most retail stores in their lingerie department for under \$15.00) Tossing your delicates in this lingerie bag helps to machine-wash your hosiery and bras without ruining them (use the delicate wash cycle). I also use my lingerie bag to wash good sweaters and other more expensive delicate items. I generally don't use the dryer for my better clothes. Purchase a small clothes line for your garage area and hang 75% of your better clothing, or of course have it dry-cleaned. I recently bought a new Maytag Washing Machine, as it does not have the center spin pole that twists clothing. Consider this the next time you need to purchase a new washer/dryer. Keeping your clothing clean is an important part of looking feminine.

I recommend all my TG women have a "beauty day" (Sat or Sun) when they wash, iron and sew their stained or torn items. And, every 2-3 weeks you're off to the nail salon to get your acrylic nails filled, and of course make time to color your hair and or eyebrows. Basically, stay ahead of the dressing game; and be prepared for the next week. Gosh, being a girl and looking good is hard work!

Twin sets (shells with a matching cardigan) are ideal for work and for cooler evenings. They also help cover larger upper arms and shoulders. Tunic (open slits on the sides) pantsuits are also ideal for the TG woman. Add one good umbrella, winter coat, and raincoat with a zipper lining.

Need to hide a potbelly?

Jackets and sweater vest hide a barrel shape belly, just add a feminine blouse! Clothing that drapes is better than tight clothing that you tuck. Loose is best, always. Again, a tunic style top is ideal to hide a multitude of sin. Consider waistbands that have elastic and have the blouse or sweater always on the outside. Keep one solid color around the waist area.

What is the best length winter coat to buy? Three-quarter, or knee-length, to go with pants or skirts. Short winter coats generally do not look good with a dress or skirt. And, girls keep your winter coat clean, especially if it is black. Keep a lint brush in your closet.

What's the best coat choice for everyone?

A trench coat with zip-out lining or a wool knee length in one of your basic colors. Remember to buy your expensive items; such as your winter coat, boots, shoes and leather handbags/wallets, during the off-season in January. Shop stores such as Wilsons Leather for a 50% on your leather or better retail stores have an end of the year sale for these items.

High quality polyester travels well without wrinkling. Also add a few expensive fabrics, a silk blouse and some pretty cashmere sweaters, and wool gabardine suits. I love Jones of New York, Ann Taylor, and Liz Claiborne for great fabrics with lining for my business suits.

Ideally, the best time to buy is twice a year at the beginning of the season.

For TG women a good alterations person is a must. Buy larger tops for your shoulders and longer arm length and have your pants and skirts taken in or purchase tops that do not have buttons or zippers. A good alterations person is a must-do expense. If you prefer to wear hip pads, please wear padding on the smaller size, over time these become annoying. I encourage my TS women to generally not wear a bra over a C cup, and to keep hip padding minimal, if any.

Does dress size matter?

Yes. If you're a perfect size 10-12 woman, you can buy less expensive clothes and they won't pull on you. If you're larger and don't have a lot to spend, I suggest saving for one good outfit. Also, check for correct dress sizing.

Most TG women will wear Misses or Womens clothing so always measure yourself and understand what category you wear, before ordering anything from a catalog. If you're able to try on clothing at a department store, you will be happier with your results. Perhaps take your SO or a genetic female with you, if you're uncomfortable in the dressing room.

How do you draw the eye up to your face and away from larger shoulders and hands?

Wear great earrings and necklaces drawing attention to your face. I always encourage my TG women to not wear large rings or dark nail polish. Keep your nails manicured and have acrylic tips applied at your nail salon, to give your hands a more feminine look. A short to medium length is best, or an athletic length. For mature women, an oval nail shape is generally best, leaving the square tips for the younger women. If you feel your hands are too large, it is best to wear only one thin ring on each hand, or no rings at all. Again, the white French-tip acrylic nails applied at a nail salon are the absolute best effect for large hands.

What is the best jewelry color to buy?

I suggest buying pieces combining both gold and silver. This prevents you from having to buy all your pieces in both colors and this is an important tip to remember when you're buying your watch. When you're first beginning to purchase your jewelry buy simple pieces. Another tip I recommend for TG women is to wear jewelry in three of your four jewelry zones. Your four zones for jewelry are: ears, neck, wrist, and fingers. Leave out the zone that you don't want to bring the most attention to. Wearing all four zones is too much jewelry for a TG woman.

Organizing Your Closet For Transition

Before a new TG woman purchases new clothing for her wardrobe, she should organize her closet and chest of drawers. How do you begin the process of knowing what clothing will work for transition? Get rid of the 50 percent of clothes that you don't wear and keep clothes you wear most of the time. A good rule is, if you haven't worn something in 3 years, there is a reason. Toss it out of your closet; you can't afford a cluttered closet on those busy mornings getting out of the house in your new femme role. (Donate clothing that is in good shape, to a woman's organization-not GoodWill.) Getting out dressed in femme is much harder than most new TS women anticipate. Remember, time is the enemy. Running late and looking half put together can ruin the experience of transition, and I see this as one of biggest problems encountered by TS women re-entering the work force. Here are a few tips I have learned from

helping clients with their closets.

First, install a good light in your closet, and put a door mirror close by. Purchase extra shoe storage and plastic wardrobe boxes for folding your small items. Purchase good hangers (all available from K-Mart) and toss out all those wire hangers. Install hooks to hang necklaces, bracelets, belts and purses. Buy a compartmentalized jewelry cabinet for fine jewelry. Use the special hangers designed for your skirts and pants. Keep scarves folded in plastic containers on a shelf for easy access or hang them with the outfits that match.

Next, determine if you prefer putting all your colors together, or putting pieces together, or assembling complete outfits including their accessories, on one hanger. This is very important for you new girls transitioning at work. Have separate drawers for your cotton T-shirts, workout clothes, undergarments, hose and socks. I recently bought a lingerie chest and I love it! They are tall with thin drawers and can easily fit in a corner of your closet or room. Always look for old chest of drawers at garage sales with large, deep drawers. You can always store chests in your closet or room for the clothing you fold.

Some women separate business, casual and evening clothes into different areas of your closet and others (including myself) separate clothing by sizes. In other words your thin clothing and your fat clothing! Consider hanging your evening and cocktail gowns and expensive fabrics in a zippered garment bag in the back of your closet or in another closet in the house. Store dressy shoes, evening bags, and accessories together in plastic (clear) wardrobe boxes, and again K-Mart has these containers. Also, organize your vanity or makeup area with good lighting, mirrors and remember to give your bedroom a new splash of color with a new feminine bed spread and color coordinated throw pillows. Make it fun ladies; this is what you have always wanted, so go for it

I recommend putting a clock nearby with a radio. And, give yourself enough time to get dressed. It is much more time consuming to pull yourself together as a woman. It takes time, energy, shopping, and it requires you to get up at least one hour earlier in the morning. By being organized, and having at least 5 outfits fully coordinated (like a uniform) you will find getting out of the house to be a more enjoyable experience ~ therefore helping you create success in your new femme role.

Now, get busy with organizing your closet!

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